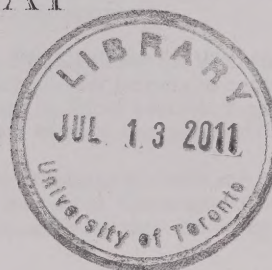


SENATE



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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 8, 2011

The Honourable NOËL A. KINSELLA
Speaker

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(Daily index of proceedings appears at back of this issue).

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THE SENATE

Wednesday, June 8, 2011

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Speaker in the chair.

Prayers.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, before we proceed, I have been asked to inform you that the official photographs of the Senate will be taken on Wednesday, June 15 and Wednesday, June 22. These photos are an important part of the parliamentary record and are useful for historical purposes.

Is it agreed that the photos be taken on those dates?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

SENATORS' STATEMENTS

PEI COALITION FOR WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP SCHOOL

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, in April, Senator Hubley and I had the great pleasure to participate in the Women in Leadership School, organized by the PEI Coalition for Women in Government. This group has been active since 2004 under the direction of Kirstin Lund, with the goal of increasing the participation of women at all levels of government.

In 1993, in my province there were eight women in the legislature, which was 25 per cent. That was the highest percentage up to that date. Today, 18 years later, the statistics are about the same: 26 per cent of MLAs are women. In 1988, I was the only female MP for Prince Edward Island, which means 25 per cent of the members from my province were women. Today, 23 years later, that percentage is the same. The numbers have shown little improvement over the years. That is why the PEI Coalition of Women in Government is so important.

The leadership school was a non-partisan two-day event, which brought Island women together with experienced female politicians from P.E.I. and across the country. The school offered skills-building workshops on a variety of topics, such as communications and campaign planning, a panel discussion with members of Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, and a keynote address by former Deputy Prime Minister Sheila Copps. To cover the different roles women might play in the political process, specific sessions were held for current elected women, candidates or potential candidates, and campaign workers.

I was fortunate to host the Friday evening "Mentoring Dinner." Participants were seated for the meal with "mentors" — women of all political stripes who have been successful in politics. It was a

great opportunity for women who are thinking about running for public office to speak with women who have already done it. About 50 Island women participated, and 2 have so far decided to seek provincial party nominations.

I congratulate the PEI Coalition for Women in Government for taking on this project and for helping to encourage more women to be involved in the political process. I also commend Sandy Kowalik for her hard work in organizing this worthwhile event.

Honourable senators, please join with me in congratulating the PEI Coalition for Women in Government on a very successful event and the important work they are doing in my province.

TIANANMEN SQUARE MASSACRE

TWENTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Consiglio Di Nino: Honourable senators, June 4, 2011, marked the twenty-second anniversary of the massacre in Tiananmen Square. This day of infamy is a reminder of the kind of madness humans are capable of and have most cruelly inflicted on their own kind.

This year, the date was once again commemorated around the world, including by tens of thousands of people in Hong Kong and by several events in my city of Toronto.

On June 1, I was honoured to attend and speak at one such event, which was sponsored by the Sam Gindin Chair in Social Justice and Democracy at Ryerson University in Toronto. The guest of honour was Mr. Fang Zheng, who, on that fateful day while trying to save a friend, lost his legs when a tank ran over him. He now lives in San Francisco where his American hosts have supplied him with prosthetic legs, which he has mastered well.

His emotional and inspirational speech was one of hope. Like most of us, he is a passionate defender of justice and fundamental rights. In his honour, I am privileged to once again mark that day of unspeakable tragedy as a reminder and a plea to China, and indeed the world, to free their people from oppressive and inhuman treatment, particularly those who stand for freedom and justice.

PARKS CANADA

ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

Hon. Elizabeth Hubley: Honourable senators, 2011 marks the one hundredth anniversary of Parks Canada. Parks Canada manages a network of 42 national parks, 167 national historic sites and 4 national marine conservation areas. As steward of Canada's unique natural areas, cultural sites and historical places, Parks Canada preserves that which is uniquely Canadian.

In 1911, few Canadians realized the impact a national parks service would have 100 years later, but from Banff National Park to the Fortress of Louisbourg, from Torngat National Park to

L'Anse aux Meadows and from Kicking Horse Pass to the Rideau Canal, Canadians from coast to coast to coast enjoy our historic sites, national parks and marine conservation parks where history, geography, culture and natural beauty are preserved, interpreted and celebrated.

In my home province of Prince Edward Island, Province House National Historic Site and the Prince Edward Island National Park are a delight for Islanders and visitors alike. The year 2011 also marks the eleventh anniversary of the opening of the Greenwich Adjunct to the Prince Edward Island National Park with its unique parabolic dune system.

In 1911, when the Canadian government established Parks Canada, it set a world standard as the first national parks service in the world. Canadians continue to benefit as we celebrate our history and natural heritage and connect to some of our greatest treasures of national beauty.

This summer, I encourage colleagues and all Canadians to celebrate this one hundredth anniversary by visiting some of Canada's most vibrant and beautiful treasures — our national parks and national historic sites.

• (1410)

RETURN OF NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE TO MANITOBA

Hon. Donald Neil Plett: Honourable senators, April 28, 1996, was a sad day for Manitobans. It was on that day that the Winnipeg Jets played their last game in Winnipeg. The Jets subsequently left for Phoenix to become the Phoenix Coyotes, leaving Manitobans broken-hearted.

The Winnipeg Jets played as one of the founding franchises in the World Hockey Association from 1972 to 1979. In 1979, the Winnipeg Jets joined the National Hockey League, and Winnipeg had a team until they left in 1996. Manitobans never gave up hope of the NHL's return.

On May 31, our wishes came true, honourable senators. The NHL made an announcement that the National Hockey League would be making its return to Manitoba, much to the chagrin of Commissioner Gary Bettman, who looked like he was attending a funeral rather than an exciting newsworthy announcement.

Mark Chipman of True North Sports and Entertainment made it official, stating: "I am excited beyond words to announce our purchase of the Atlanta Thrashers."

Manitobans crowded the streets to celebrate at the Forks and at the historic intersection of Portage and Main, where Bobby Hull once signed his million-dollar deal with the World Hockey Association's Winnipeg Jets in 1972.

The deal was contingent on 13,000 season tickets being sold over a three-week period. Manitobans rose to the challenge. Hockey fans in Manitoba purchased 7,200 season tickets in three days of pre-sale and a further 6,000 in just 17 minutes of the general public sale. As well, all 55 of the luxury boxes ranging in

price from \$105,000 to \$197,000 per year and requiring a minimum seven-year commitment have also sold out. There is a registered waiting list of 8,000 people paying \$100 per ticket per year just to be there.

There are those who question the viability of an NHL team in Winnipeg. Winnipeg's arena, the MTS Centre, seats 15,000 people. Winnipeg has the smallest arena in the smallest market of the entire NHL, yet they enjoy greater ticket revenues than most NHL teams. Ticket sales alone will generate more than \$54 million annually. They are guaranteed to be sold out for at least the next three years.

Last season, seven of the U.S.-based National Hockey League teams had an average attendance of less than the MTS Centre's capacity, and this season a third of all U.S.-based teams are attracting crowds that would not fill Winnipeg's arena.

Take heart, Quebec City — you are next; who knows, maybe Hamilton and then Saskatoon. Never lose hope. Hockey is Canada's game and Canada is the NHL's most viable market. A new report recently found that Canada's hockey fans could support 12 teams, five more than it currently has.

Honourable senators, please join me in congratulating Manitoba on its triumphant return to the National Hockey League.

Hon. Rod A.A. Zimmer: Honourable senators, I rise today to honour a team, like the prodigal son who returned home and also rose like the flight of the phoenix.

Let trumpets blast, the choirs sing, the little children play, and let there be a parting of the Red River, with a huge debt of gratitude to the Chipman family and David Thomson: The Jets are back!

Honourable senators, on behalf of all my Manitoba colleagues in both places, we know that no one wanted the Jets to leave in the first place. It was an incredibly hard time for the players on the team as well as the fans. During their final games, they were unable even to look up from the bleachers without tears gathering in their eyes.

From 1995 to 1996 the NHL had a four-month lockout just before the Winnipeg Jets left. The fans of the team threw a fundraising event that was attended by over 35,000 people and raised more than half a million dollars, but it was still not enough to keep them for even one more year.

Honourable senators, fans of the Winnipeg Jets are absolutely thrilled that they have their team back. It was confirmed that it was a good move when all the season tickets sold out within 17 minutes of going on sale. With an extra 8,000 people on the waiting list, we now have a commitment of three to five years of season tickets.

Honourable senators, I had the distinct privilege to fly back to Ottawa via Toronto on the historic day of May 31, 2011, and as I sat across the aisle from Mr. Thomson, I said to him, "Some may know you as Mr. Thomson or King David, but in the hearts of Manitoba fans, you will always be known as Saint David."

Honourable senators, no matter what they call the team, the hearts of Manitoba fans will always sing, "Go, Jets, go!"

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Hon. Donald H. Oliver: Honourable senators, 2011 is the International Year for People of African Descent. To celebrate this major event, Nova Scotia will be hosting the 7th International African Diaspora Heritage Trail Conference.

[English]

For the first time in its history, the International African Diaspora Heritage Trail Conference will be held in Canada. Bermuda, the Bahamas and Tanzania have hosted past conferences and now it is our turn.

From September 22 to 24, scholars, historians, politicians, dignitaries and tourism specialists from around the world will converge in Halifax, Nova Scotia, for this international conference. Three full days of events and activities are planned.

What is the African diaspora? It is an important, worldwide phenomenon. It is the breakup and scattering of Africans and their descendants to destinations around the world. It is also the story of how Africans successfully retained their cultural traditions, preserved their identities and built new communities outside the African continent.

The main purpose of the conference is to link the African diaspora by developing and sustaining cultural heritage destinations.

This year's theme is "Our Heritage, Our Future — Preserve. Promote. Protect."

The conference will work on ways to preserve, promote and protect our heritage by: identifying and maintaining various tangible and intangible artifacts that represent African culture — dance, folklore, fine art, literature, oral traditions and history; creating economic initiatives and tourism strategies that capitalize on cultural and historical assets; helping people and communities of African descent maintain their distinct heritage and culture; and promoting destinations and historic sites of the African diaspora. For example, Birchtown, Nova Scotia, was the home of the largest community of free men and women of African descent outside of Africa in the late 1700s. It is one of many important sites on the African Diaspora Heritage Trail.

Honourable senators, I am honoured to have been asked to serve as the honorary chair of this year's conference. My view is that this international cultural tourism initiative will provide us with a golden opportunity to engage in stimulating discussions on the significance of the African diaspora.

[Translation]

I am honoured to have the opportunity to speak at the opening ceremonies on September 23 at the World Trade and Convention Centre in Halifax.

[English]

Honourable senators, as you know, 2011 is the International Year for People of African Descent. Hosting this international conference offers Canada an opportunity to highlight the key role African-Canadians have played in shaping our history and collective identity. I encourage all honourable senators to visit Halifax in September and participate in these three days of rich conversations on the African diaspora and the collective heritage of Africans from around the world.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD

Hon. Joseph A. Day: Honourable senators, last week I had the honour of attending the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award ceremony at Halifax's historic Pier 21. There were 44 deserving young Canadians receiving a gold award from His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston. It was the culmination of countless hours of hard work and commitment for these young men and women, and an experience that will contribute greatly to their growth and future success.

• (1420)

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award program was founded in 1956 by His Royal Highness Prince Philip and was meant to inspire youth and enrich their lives through leisure-time activity by setting a series of goals that encourage personal discovery, growth, self-reliance, perseverance and responsibility. It is a program that is not based on membership or competition, but rather on inclusion and voluntary participation. These principles formed the basis of the award.

Since that time, the award program has spread internationally, and today there are 132 participating countries in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Network, with 850,000 participants worldwide. Since its inception, the award program has granted over 3 million awards to youth from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances.

Given the success of the award, it is little surprise that the program has a strong foothold in Canada and has been operating here since 1963. With a presence in every Canadian province and territory, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award currently has 37,000 participants in Canada and is projected to grow in the near future to 40,000. In an effort to make it accessible to all Canadian youth, the award has developed a number of initiatives to reach out to "at-risk" youth, those with disabilities, young offenders, inner city youth, Aboriginal youth and those in remote areas, ensuring its relevance today as it was 50 years ago.

Available to all Canadian youth ages 14 to 25, the award is broken down into three levels: bronze, silver and gold. Each of these levels requires accomplishments in the four sections of the program, namely, service, expeditions, skills and fitness.

While there is a minimum age requirement for each level, these awards are granted based on how much time has been committed to each of these four sections by the youth. For example, to obtain the gold award, not only must an individual fulfill the requirements in all four sections, they must also work on a fifth section with their peers, a residential project, for a period of five consecutive days and four nights. Some of the youth have participated in archaeological digs, cadet camps and tall ships training expeditions.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award has for decades inspired youth to take on challenges that will enrich their lives. Whether or not they achieve an award, the program helps immensely in encouraging young Canadians to develop well-rounded, active lifestyles. I encourage all honourable senators to look into this program and consider helping to develop an award program in your region. It is an excellent program for the youth of our country of all backgrounds.

PHYSICALLY DISABLED ATHLETES

ROLLING RAMPAGE

Hon. Vim Kochhar: Honourable senators, it is with great pride that I rise in the chamber to announce the success of the Rolling Rampage, which took place on the front steps of Parliament Hill on April 14, 2011.

The Rolling Rampage, an event designed to promote awareness of athletes who are physically disabled, had five years of success in Toronto. As the founding chair, I wanted to spread this event to other parts of Canada. Parliament Hill, an institution that is the symbol of Canadian democracy, seemed like the natural destination for the Rolling Rampage.

Rolling Rampage is a 10-kilometre international wheelchair road race with a prize purse of \$30,000, one of the highest in the world.

Many Canadians are unaware of the intricacies and commitment involved in the sport of wheelchair road racing. On April 14, the Rolling Rampage gave the Ottawa public their first taste of this exciting, exhilarating and challenging race, finishing 10K in less than 23 minutes and going around Parliament Hill in less than 1.2 minutes. The 3,000 people we had in attendance witnessed the world's fastest athletes on wheels, and Canada's own Josh Cassidy and Diane Roy finished first in their respective races.

Many senators in the Red Chamber today had their first experience of wheelchair road racing as we arranged for senators to participate in their own relay teams. I am sure many of them will agree with me when I say that it is a lot harder than it looks.

It is incredibly important for Canadians to understand the challenges that persons who are physically disabled face and overcome. The strong will of individuals who are put in these unfortunate circumstances is something all Canadians can admire and relate to. No matter how difficult the situation, we, as Canadians, will persevere.

[Senator Day]

On behalf of the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons, the Canadian Paralympic Foundation, the Ottawa Lions Athletic Club and the elite wheelchair athletes, I wish to thank the Parliament of Canada and the City of Ottawa for the tremendous support of this historical event. Events like this keep Canada the top nation in the disability movement.

[Translation]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SENATE ETHICS OFFICER

2010-11 ANNUAL REPORT TABLED

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the sixth Annual Report, for 2010-11, of the Senate Ethics Officer, pursuant to section 20.7 of the Parliament of Canada Act.

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY AT KINGSTON

PRIVATE BILL TO AMEND CONSTITUTION OF CORPORATION—FIRST READING

Hon. Joseph A. Day presented Bill S-1001, An Act respecting Queen's University at Kingston.

(Bill read first time.)

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, when shall this bill be read the second time?

(On motion of Senator Day, for Senator Murray, bill placed on the Orders of the Day for second reading two days hence.)

[English]

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Jane Cordy: Honourable senators, pursuant to rule 57(2), I give notice that, two days hence:

I will draw the attention of the Senate to those Canadians living with multiple sclerosis (MS) and chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI), who lack access to the "liberation" procedure.

• (1430)

QUESTION PERIOD

HEALTH

TRANSFER PAYMENT AGREEMENTS WITH PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES

Hon. James S. Cowan (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

The health accord between the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories expires in 2014. Is your government committed to negotiating an agreement with all the provinces and territories, or will it be settling for a series of one-off deals?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank the honourable senator for the question. Our government continues to make health care a priority. We have increased transfer payments to the provinces and territories by over 30 per cent since forming government so that the provinces and territories can address their health care needs. We will continue to work collaboratively with the provinces and territories while respecting the fact that this is very much within their jurisdictions.

In the election we committed to increases and have budgeted a further 6 per cent annual increase. We have also pledged to work with the provinces to reduce waiting times and increase accountability. We will work with the provinces to formalize those issues and other specifics in the renewed accord.

What we will not be doing is what was done by the previous government, which basically was to pay down the deficit on the backs of the provinces and territories. The health care system has still not recovered.

Senator Cowan: Therefore, honourable senators, there will be no single agreement with the provinces, except for Quebec. A separate arrangement has been concluded with Quebec. I take it from the leader's answer that there will be a series of one-off deals with the individual provinces; is that correct?

Senator LeBreton: Senator Cowan is drawing a conclusion that I did not make. I am simply saying that this is 2011. The existing accords last until the year 2014. Before the coalition opposition defeated the government, a Senate committee was about to study this important area.

The commitment the government made in the past and again during the election campaign was to budget a further 6 per cent annual increase to the provinces and territories. As I mentioned, the government has increased funding to the provinces and territories by over 30 per cent since it came into power. Any future arrangements that are made with the provinces and territories will be made by the government as a whole, by the Minister of Health and by the Prime Minister. The honourable senator must not draw any conclusions from my previous answer.

Senator Cowan: I think the question was fairly simple. To the leader's point about our committee conducting its study at the request of the Minister of Health, I hope that request will be

renewed and that our committee will be conducting that study. I am looking at my friend Senator Ogilvie as I speak. I hope that study will be conducted, because that committee has done useful work in the past in that area, and I look forward to that.

My question had to do with whether or not there will be a single arrangement, subject to the Quebec exception, or whether there will be a series of side deals.

In every poll that I can recall in the last year or so, Canadians have shown that the accessibility, portability and future sustainability of our health care system is of utmost importance, and it beats out almost every issue — and indeed, in some polls, every issue — and nothing is more important than that. However, there is nothing in the Throne Speech, apart from the promises that the leader mentioned, to demonstrate that this government shares that priority with Canadians.

I need to know from the leader how Canadians can be assured that they will have access to appropriate health care wherever they live in the country, rather than a patchwork of different systems and standards, which would be the inevitable result, I suggest, of the government's patchwork approach to this problem.

Senator LeBreton: The government is not taking a patchwork approach to the problem. This is 2011. The existing accords do not expire until 2014. The honourable senator is naturally drawing conclusions or making assumptions that have no basis in fact.

There is no doubt that Canada's health care system and the issue of health care is very important to Canadians. We certainly recognize that. That is why we have lived up to our commitments to the provinces and territories. Talking about issues being top of mind, I would dare say that on May 2 the Canadian public gave this government a clear mandate to continue governing, and our stated position on health care was part of that mandate.

ENVIRONMENT

UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE—CANADA'S REPORT ON GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Hon. Grant Mitchell: Honourable senators, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Canada has an obligation to report each year on greenhouse gas emissions from our various industrial sectors. In fact, traditionally our government has reported, sector by sector, on emissions. However, this year, interestingly, the government failed to report on significant increases in greenhouse gas emissions in the oil sands sector. Did this government mislead the UN — in fact, mislead the world — on purpose, or was this just an unfortunate oversight?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I am always amazed that Senator Mitchell, representing the province of Alberta, always attacks a very important industry for Alberta in the oil sands project. I often wonder how he gets through the Calgary airport. He must have to put a brown bag on his head.

The fact of the matter is that our government is concentrating on what matters to Canadians — jobs and economic growth. The oil sands are responsible for over 140,000 jobs across Canada and that number is expected to grow. We know the importance of getting the environmental challenges right. That is why we have invested in new technology to help minimize the impact on the environment.

Senator Mitchell: The funny thing is that Albertans actually like to tell the truth; and when you send the wrong messages and give the wrong information, you are not representing Albertans, nor any Canadian in this country, or elsewhere, for that matter.

Is the leader actually inferring that the only way we could represent Albertans on an industry that is very important to them is not to tell the truth to the world?

Senator LeBreton: I think that Albertans are well known for telling the truth. Witness the results of the election on May 2.

Senator Mitchell: It is interesting, because the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers was telling the truth. Is the government aware that that association, in reaction to this report that is misleading the world, has said that they expected greater transparency from their government and that they fear the figures that were put into that report will, in fact, mislead the world and discredit Canada, Alberta, and the industry?

Senator LeBreton: I absolutely do not accept the comments just made by Senator Mitchell. He knows that is not the case. The government is very responsible in all elements of the environment. It is irresponsible for the honourable senator to make assumptions that are flat out false.

Senator Mitchell: Could the leader accept that her spokesperson said that the government purposely put the data in that report in that way, and could the government correct this oversight? Could the government commit right now to correct this oversight and to send a corrected report to the UN, and to the world, in the hope of perhaps regaining some credibility in the world on this very important issue?

Senator LeBreton: I thank the senator for the question. I will pass on his misinformation to the powers that be.

[Translation]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

LAST POST FUND

Hon. Lucie Pépin: Honourable senators, my question has to do with the Last Post Fund, the federal program that ensures that impoverished veterans receive a dignified funeral in return for their service. The \$3,600 provided through this program does not cover the actual cost of a funeral. Veterans' associations believe that this amount should be increased and have called on the government to do so. Yet veterans will have to wait once again, since this year's budget does not contain any measures to correct this problem.

[Senator LeBreton]

How can we reassure our veterans who are worried about not having suitable funerals because of a lack of financial resources?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): I thank Senator Pépin for the question. As honourable senators know, we have a new Minister of Veterans Affairs in the person of our colleague from the province of Quebec, Mr. Blaney. While the government has made great strides on improving services to veterans, we realize that we still have some work to do.

There is updated information that I do not have available to me right now, so I will be happy to take the question as notice and provide the proper information.

[Translation]

Senator Pépin: Honourable senators, in 2009, the Veterans Ombudsman conducted an administrative review of the veterans' funeral program. The report made seven major recommendations to improve this program. That was in 2009.

Could the Leader of the Government in the Senate tell us what progress the government has made in implementing these recommendations?

[English]

Senator LeBreton: As Senator Pépin mentioned, the former ombudsman made several recommendations. I will take the question as notice and provide an answer.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PASSPORT SERVICES IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Hon. Catherine S. Callbeck: Honourable senators, my question is directed to the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I was disappointed that the Speech from the Throne did not mention any commitment to expand passport services in Prince Edward Island. We all know that Islanders are the only Canadians who must go outside their own province to apply for an urgent or emergency passport: They have to go to Fredericton or Halifax.

What will the government do to ensure that Islanders can apply in person for an emergency or express passport in their own province?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I thank Senator Callbeck for the question. This is a question that she has asked in the past. As honourable senators know, the government has vastly increased the capacity of Service Canada. As well, individual members of Parliament provide passport clinics in their own constituency offices.

I did ask, honourable senators, how many people across the country, on average, are not being well served by our passport offices. As opposed to a few years ago, when this was a serious

issue, one area that has been a tremendous success is the streamlined process that the government has provided to ensure that all Canadians have access to passport services.

I do believe, honourable senators, in relation to the questions Senator Callbeck asked before about the specific cases of emergency passports, that I took that question as notice. I asked for specific information from Passport Canada. Of course, the defeat of the government by the opposition coalition caused all questions that I had taken as notice to die on the Order Paper. I will be happy to submit the question once again for a written answer.

Senator Callbeck: Honourable senators, I am specifically asking about emergency and urgent passports and the fact that Islanders must go outside their province to apply for this type of passport.

Earlier this year the government announced that some Service Canada staff members were now authorized to review and validate that the applicant had provided an acceptable proof of Canadian citizenship document to support the passport application.

In March I asked the Leader of the Government why the same staff members could not be trained to accept applications in person for urgent or express passports. The leader indicated then that she would take the comments to the minister. Has she received a reply to this question from the minister?

Senator LeBreton: Honourable senators, I just received a note that an answer was provided to Senator Callbeck, by way of a delayed answer on March 24. I will ask my office to retrieve that answer and resubmit it.

Senator Callbeck: With all due respect, that answer did not respond to my question. The specific question is why the same staff members who are now trained to review and validate the application cannot be trained to take applications for urgent and emergency passports.

Senator LeBreton: I thank the honourable senator for the question. I will take it as notice.

INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

BUDGET 2011—PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Elizabeth Hubley: Honourable senators, my question is directed to the Leader of the Government in the Senate. When I read the budget I was delighted to see the government pledge to promote safer Aboriginal communities. Statistics show that the violent crime rate in Nunavut is nine times the national average. This is unacceptable.

Clearly we must take action to keep our northern communities safe, but the strategy proposed by the government in Monday's budget is a band-aid solution. The government is planning to spend millions of dollars to hire more police officers, prosecutors

and judges in order to put more Aboriginal people behind bars. Meanwhile, it has cut funding for Aboriginal housing by 45 per cent. This is the wrong approach.

We know that overcrowding is a serious problem in Aboriginal communities. Not surprisingly, overcrowding has been linked to chronic stress, frustration, substance abuse and, ultimately, domestic violence.

Why is the government not taking a proactive approach to crime in Aboriginal communities by investing in preventative measures, such as building more housing, rather than simply sending more vulnerable people to jail?

Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government): The honourable senator has a selective view. Much work has been done in bettering the lives of our Aboriginal communities. There is no doubt that there is a great deal of work yet to be done.

I will again put on the record some of the things the government has done since taking office: We have made important and strategic investments in improving the lives of Aboriginal Canadians; we have made great progress on economic development, schools, housing, water quality, land claims and education. As I mentioned a moment ago, there is still a lot more to be done.

We are once again delivering strategic investments to help improve the lives of all Aboriginal Canadians and northerners in economic development, infrastructure, green energy, crime prevention and, of course — as the Speech from the Throne mentioned in terms of economic development — a road from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk. The budget also provides student loan forgiveness for doctors and nurses working in remote areas, including Aboriginal areas, and outlines an investment of \$9 million for adult basic education in the North. All of these measures are far and beyond the honourable senator's claim that all we are trying to do is put people in jail.

Since 2006, we have delivered a great many projects through our Economic Action Plan, which have provided facilities, work, training and education in the more high-risk areas in Aboriginal communities, on reserves and in the North.

Since coming to office, we have made significant investments of almost \$1 billion to improve on-reserve housing for First Nations. I am not certain where the honourable senator gets the idea that we are not committed to housing. Of course, these investments have contributed to an annual average of 2,300 new units and 3,300 renovations, and also support social housing and other housing-related activities.

I think the honourable senator should be prepared to give credit where credit is due. We have made great strides in trying to improve the lives of our Aboriginal Canadians.

Senator Hubley: I do appreciate the answer, and I commend all governments on any initiatives they put forward through their programs to advance our Aboriginal communities. I mentioned that the crime rate in Nunavut is nine times that of the rest of Canada. That is still an unacceptable number.

• (1450)

Given the fact that a number of federal offenders, in particular Aboriginal offenders, suffer from addictions and mental health problems, and that these numbers are on the rise, why does the budget not address these issues as part of its strategy to improve public safety for our Aboriginal communities?

Senator LeBreton: I thank Senator Hubley for the question. When one looks at the programs that the government has embarked upon, there is no question that the situation in the North — with our Aboriginal communities in terms of the crime rate, substance abuse and all of the issues the honourable senator mentioned — is massively difficult to deal with. However, through the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and other agencies, such as HRSDC and Health Canada, there are a host of government programs which deal specifically with health

issues in the North and with our Aboriginal communities. There is a long list of programs that the government has embarked upon, and I will be happy to provide that list to Senator Hubley.

[Translation]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Hon. Claude Carignan (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, since we are in the process of setting up the various committees in order to proceed with the business of the Senate, and because we have reached the end of the Order Paper, I move that the Senate adjourn until tomorrow.

(The Senate adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow.)

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